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New York

President:	Mr. Kumalo	(South Africa)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Belle
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Soler Torrijos
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. DeLaurentis
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

Small arms

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258)

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08-32354 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Small arms

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Australia, Austria, Argentina, Benin, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Congo, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Malawi, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Uganda and Uruguay, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

It is so decided.

I invite Ms. Hoppe to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members have before them document S/2008/258, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on small arms.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

I now give the floor to Ms. Hannelore Hoppe.

Ms. Hoppe: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the Security Council the report of the Secretary-General on small arms, contained in document S/2008/258, which is being submitted pursuant to the Security Council's request to the Secretary-General in document S/PRST/2007/24 to submit on a biennial basis, beginning in 2008, a report containing his analysis, observations and recommendations, as well as his observations on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The Security Council's open debate today once again underscores the importance that the Council attaches to this issue, which cuts across most of the issues that are on its agenda, be they the ongoing armed conflicts in various parts of the world, children in armed conflict, terrorism, drug trafficking, cross-border issues, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, or others. The threat to international peace and security posed by the uncontrolled trade in small arms and their excessive accumulation and proliferation cannot be overemphasized.

We have all witnessed how those weapons have been used to maim and kill, plunder and rape, instil fear and insecurity, block humanitarian aid, hold communities at ransom and destroy the social fabric of entire countries, and how their excessive accumulation and misuse have hindered stability and development in every way imaginable.

The report discusses various aspects of the issue of small arms, with an emphasis on the negative impact that illicit small arms have on security, human rights and social and economic development, in particular in areas of crisis and post-conflict situations. It also analyses global instruments of relevance in stemming the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms, including the United Nations Programme of Action.

In addressing the issue of small arms, the report places particular emphasis on fostering enhanced cooperation and assistance among national authorities; enhancing synergies between various bodies within the

United Nations involved in the issue, including the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission; exploring possibilities for further improving the monitoring of Security Council arms embargoes; developing forms of standardization of end-user certificates; drawing urgent attention to the destruction of surplus ammunition stockpiles and to stockpile management; encouraging the development of measurable goals for reducing armed violence; and building capacity for States that need it.

The report underscores the importance of developing practical exchanges between the Security Council and the General Assembly on stemming the illicit flows of arms and ammunition to areas of crisis and conflict. In this regard, the Secretary-General considers it promising that the Council has requested a report on the issue on a biennial basis following the same two-year cycle as that of the meetings held pursuant to the Programme of Action.

Furthermore, the report draws attention to the fact that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms could be instrumental for the Security Council and for efforts undertaken in the framework of the Programme of Action, since it has opened the possibility for States to report on man-portable air defence systems and on small arms.

Finally, the report presents a total of 13 recommendations with respect to the negative effects of illicit small arms. Six of the recommendations directly address the Security Council, and it may wish to consider them, where it deems relevant to do so. The first of these is to encourage a strengthened cooperation between the Council's sanctions monitoring groups, peacekeeping missions, States and regional and international organizations. The second is to strengthen the synergies between the Council's arms embargoes and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts. The third is to encourage States and peacekeeping missions to use the new International Tracing Instrument and INTERPOL's global police communication system. The fourth is to increasingly apply its practice of linking arms embargo exceptions with security sector reform. The final recommendation that directly addresses the Security Council is for the Council to encourage States to enhance their efforts to certify and standardize end-user certificates.

The Secretary-General is encouraged by the continued efforts of the Security Council to address the challenges posed by illicit small arms and light weapons in the context of matters under the Council's consideration. For his part, the Secretary-General is committed to further improving coordination within the United Nations system with a view to strengthening its actions on issues related to small arms. In this regard, he has identified reviving the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) mechanism as one of his priorities in the field of disarmament this year.

It is my hope that this report will be helpful to the Council and that it will serve to facilitate the Council's further consideration of the issue of small arms. I also hope that today's meeting will enhance the determination of Member States to strengthen their implementation of the Programme of Action.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes — no more than five minutes — in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate their texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the organization of this debate of the Security Council on small arms, the first of its type since 2006, on a subject which is of such key importance and thanks you, Mr. President, for having undertaken this initiative.

This question, as we are all well aware, is at the core of the Security Council's mandate, since efforts to contain the uncontrolled spread of light weapons today are fundamental to conflict prevention and the maintenance of international peace and security.

I would therefore like to thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her comprehensive presentation of the Secretary-General's report.

The struggle to contain the proliferation of small arms is one of the most complex tasks and therefore one of the most difficult, because the need to save human lives, to maintain territorial integrity and the

stability of countries, to put an end to serious violations of human rights and to support development efforts puts it at odds with economic and trade interests.

The report of the Secretary-General clearly shows that the conflict between development and the spread of small arms is not an illusion, since security and economic and social development are so closely linked.

Faced with such a situation, efforts at strengthening the legal framework and cooperation at the national, regional and international levels must be stepped up.

In this regard, the United Nations has developed a programme of sustained action that has contributed to a better awareness of the magnitude of the phenomenon of the spread of small arms and to better organize initiatives designed to cope with it.

Here, we can cite, inter alia, the entry into force of the Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime — the Palermo Convention — on firearms; the adoption of a Programme of Action in 2001 and of a decision of the General Assembly on the identification and tracing of small arms; and the regular evaluation of embargoes imposed by the Security Council.

However, these efforts have turned out to be insufficient to halt, let alone put an end to, the spread of small arms, which continue daily to claim victims, above all among civilian populations.

We therefore urge the United Nations to step up its efforts in this area by placing particular stress on concerted action, coherence and coordination, as stated in the relevant observations and recommendations of the Secretary-General.

It also seems important to us to highlight the subregional aspect in the struggle against illicit trafficking in small arms, given our view that all conflicts hold the potential of becoming subregional conflagrations.

West Africa, which is paying a heavy price as a result of the devastating effects of small arms, has established a legal and institutional framework to better combat this scourge, and has launched programmes for the collection and destruction of surplus stocks of small arms.

The United Nations, and specifically the Security Council, must support this kind of effort. In particular, the structures and missions of the Security Council must pay greater heed to these regional and subregional organizations, as was correctly emphasized in the 16 April debate in the Security Council.

Moreover, the regional offices of the United Nations and the representatives of the Secretary-General can also play a significant role in the field by supporting and assisting the efforts deployed.

Burkina Faso has subscribed to the Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, adopted in Bamako on 1 December 2000. It has also established a High Authority to control the import of weapons and their use and formed a national commission to combat the spread of light weapons. It has strengthened its national legislation and adapted it to the relevant regional and international instruments.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to underscore the following requirements which we believe are indispensable for an effective struggle against the spread of small arms. First, the international legal framework must be strengthened through the adoption of a legally binding international instrument on the subject of tracing and marking of small arms, which would also have provisions on brokering. Secondly, country capacity must be strengthened, particularly in the area of border control. Thirdly, all surplus stocks must be destroyed. Fourthly, international cooperation must be strengthened and synergy of action established among all the major players, including the regional and subregional organizations, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization, among others. Finally, the Security Council must impose an embargo on small arms and light weapons and bring about increased vigilance in the verification of end-user certificates.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, this debate is the last public meeting of the Security Council under South Africa's presidency as an elected member of the Security Council. I would like to start by paying tribute to your leadership and lucid conduct of the Council. You are a worthy representative of a country with high ethical values, the only one that has dismantled its entire nuclear arsenal, a State respected in Africa and the entire world.

For Costa Rica, to participate in a debate on any question related to arms reduction, whatever they may be, is a moral obligation. For sixty years now, my country has made disarmament a national cause and a priority of our foreign policy.

However, small arms still compromise the security of our communities. They have been and still are instruments of war in neighbouring countries and are objects of illicit trade for those who traffic in death. For this reason, we actively support the work that this Council has been doing on small arms since 1999. However, few aspects of the true process of civilization have encountered as many obstacles as has the regulation of the arms trade. Progress is slow, and it cannot be otherwise. As has occurred in other scourges of humanity, such as climate change, profit is an irrational stimulus and much more powerful than rationality in human beings.

Every day, there are more industrial plants in more countries devoted to arms production. Every day that goes by, illicit trafficking represents a larger percentage of the arms trade. Every year, the small arms and ammunitions manufactured and sold are sufficient to kill all of humanity twice over.

That is why we welcome the work of this Council. Around the table today are at least seven States that are among the biggest manufacturers of small arms in the world. Looking at the candidacies submitted, next year we could have nine of the major stakeholders in the small arms industry. No other intergovernmental forum brings together so much power nor has so many instruments for action as this Council. It is just a question of will.

In the nine years since the Security Council decided to address this issue, the international community has produced important instruments. Perhaps the most important among them is the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in 2001. However, as the Secretary-General points out in his report, that framework has not generated all the necessary action, either nationally or regionally, to transform it into a more useful instrument. After the difficult process of adopting an international instrument of such nature and scope, we still need to overcome tremendous obstacles, as the biennial meetings of the Programme of Action and its review conference demonstrated.

The Secretary-General indeed points out that one of the reasons why there has not been progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action is the fact that it is not binding. That could be the fundamental barrier. In this area, rules are not binding for States and never become anything more than mere declarations of principle.

I would like to digress from the topic at hand to look at a parallel process, in which some members of the Council are working, which seeks to open a window of opportunity to work on binding instruments related to armaments. I am referring here to the Group of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General to examine the feasibility of a binding instrument to regulate the arms trade.

This initiative came about in 1995 when a group of Nobel Peace Laureates, led by the President of Costa Rica, launched the idea of an international code of conduct. That idea was taken up by the United Kingdom and a significant number of other countries and non-governmental organizations, who converted it into a resolution of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. We hope that with the passage of time and intensification of the endeavours of all of us who believe in the need to effectively regulate the arms trade, we will succeed in making the international instruments in this area binding.

Just for a moment, I would like to focus on the report of the Secretary-General. Costa Rica agrees with the priority granted to the reactivation of the coordination of this Organization's action on small arms and to the strengthening of exchanges between the General Assembly and the Security Council on containing the illicit flows of arms to zones of crisis and conflict.

We are also grateful for and support the recommendations in the report, three of which we consider are the primary responsibility of the Security Council. First, the question of small arms and light weapons must be incorporated in the mandates and reports of the political, the peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Secondly, in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, the component relating to disarmament and destruction of weapons stocks must be strengthened. Thirdly, monitoring mechanisms must be revitalized and Security Council sanctions imposed, in particular with regard to arms embargoes.

These are clear responsibilities of the Council, to which my delegation would like to contribute.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important meeting. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the subject. In addition, I also wish to thank Mrs. Hannalore Hoppe, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her briefing this morning.

Today, the Security Council is discussing the subject of small arms and light weapons and illicit arms, as it has for eight consecutive years. This shows the interest that the Council has manifested in this issue, an issue linked to international peace, security and stability. Indeed, those weapons stir up conflicts and have negative repercussions on development in all regions of the world, in particular on the African continent. The most recent studies have, in fact, shown that the cost of armed conflict in Africa is currently exceeding $18 billion. This indeed is a considerable cost to the continent.

We are deeply concerned by the continued annual production of huge amounts of small arms. According to the report of the Secretary-General, more than 1,000 firms are manufacturing those arms in more than 100 United Nations Member States. The number of small arms produced annually is estimated at about 7.5 million units, a figure which, we believe exceeds States' needs for legitimate self-defence and prompts us to wonder about this surplus of weapons and the responsibility of arms-producing countries in the illicit spread of small arms.

Prohibiting the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons would have beneficial results: it would halt armed conflict and stop terrorism and organized crime. These are factors that could ensure stability in the developing world. As was stated by the representative of Costa Rica, this is first and foremost a question of political will on the part of States.

While we are grateful to the Security Council for having dealt with the question of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons within the framework of its mandate to maintain international peace and security, we need to take into account the broader dimensions of the issue. What is needed is to promote synergy among the various bodies concerned, in particular the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission, as noted by the Secretary-General in his recommendations. Member States should cooperate and collaborate in order to deal with this issue.

Libya believes that the ability of the United Nations to deal successfully with the risks involved in small arms and light weapons hinges on consensus — on the consideration of the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms, which the General Assembly adopted in 2001 by consensus. The Programme of Action includes numerous important measures and is underpinned by a number of principles, which provide a legal and legitimate basis for it, such as the right of States to self-defence, the right of all peoples to self-determination and the right of peoples under occupation to resist. Thus, we all need to cooperate and show the necessary political will to ensure the success of the review conference on the implementation of the Programme of Action to be held in July of this year.

Libya supports all initiatives aimed at ensuring the tracing and marking of illicit small arms and light weapons to ensure credibility and verifiability. We therefore support the adoption by the General Assembly in December 2005 of an international instrument to this end. Although that instrument is non-binding, it is our hope that member States will implement all of its provisions.

Cooperation among States in the area of tracing illicit small arms and light weapons is vital to success here. My country complies with international marking standards in order to make clear both the country that produces the weapons and the country to which they are being exported. Appropriate and strict control measures and national laws are being implemented in a regulated framework to govern the use of arms by the competent authorities. This is our contribution to deal with illicit trafficking in these weapons.

At the regional level, coordination among Arab States is exercised through regular meetings of the focal points in charge of identification and tracing of small arms and light weapons, to ensure an exchange of data and experience and to analyse regional and international developments related to this issue. The secretariat of the League of Arab States is also a depositary of the texts of laws and regulations on small arms, which become a data base that makes full use of the capacity of the States in the region.

Accordingly, our delegation supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General encouraging States to collect, maintain and share data on small arms. Combating the proliferation of small arms requires that we pool our efforts and engage in coordination at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

Finally, it is our hope that the international community will be able to implement international priorities with respect to disarmament, nuclear disarmament and the destruction of weapons of mass destruction and to the regulation of the genuine root causes of armed conflict.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate of the Security Council, and congratulate you and South Africa on the leadership you have shown in guiding the work of the Council for this month. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2008/258) and the Director for her introduction.

Viet Nam is convinced that general and complete disarmament constitutes a solid guarantee for world peace and security and that the illicit trade in small arms can strain relations between States, fuelling and increasing violent disturbances, especially transnational crimes and civil wars, each causing much suffering to human beings. Viet Nam therefore realizes the need for the international community to strengthen cooperation against the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

I wish to reaffirm Viet Nam's support for the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Recent reviews show that remarkable efforts have been made by countries in different parts of the world, resulting in the enhanced awareness of the need for effective control of such illicit activities and the birth of mechanisms supporting implementation of this Programme of Action.

In the light of the fact that much remains to be done in the context of the many prolonged conflicts and the growing threats of transnational crimes and terrorism, the United Nations must be supported in continuing its central role in promoting and sustaining international cooperation. We share the view of the Secretary-General that, within the United Nations, coordination on the issue of small arms could benefit from further improvement. We look forward to studying specific proposals to this end, including those aimed at promoting exchanges between the Security Council and the General Assembly on the issue.

We commend the Secretary-General for the comprehensiveness of his report and are of the view that the recommendations contained therein relating to a wide range of activities of the United Nations, the Security Council and Member States deserve and require careful consideration. Viet Nam reaffirms its view that the establishment, deployment and extension of peace-keeping missions and the expansion of their mandates must be with the consent of all parties concerned, must respect the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of States and the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs, and must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Viet Nam supports the role of the Security Council in the inclusion of United Nations arms embargoes monitoring functions in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions, as outlined in recommendation 5. However, we consider it necessary to further study the feasibility of the development of quantitative indicators for the area of small arms with a view to their being used as a base against which to set measurable goals and a 2015 deadline for that work to be done, as mentioned in recommendation 2. Discussions within the framework of the General Assembly and the Council in recent years have shown that there are still different views among Member States and that an early consensus is unlikely.

We concur with the view of the Secretary-General that Member States remain central providers of security and that that is their sovereign right and responsibility. The production, importation and retention of small arms and light weapons in particular and of conventional weapons in general for the purpose of national defence and security remain the legitimate right of every sovereign State, recognized by international conventions. International cooperation in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and preventing them from falling into the hands of members of organized crime and terrorists is necessary, but it must be in accordance with the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and it must not affect that legitimate right of States.

Viet Nam is fully committed to implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Since the submission of its report on the implementation of the Programme of Action in 2006, Viet Nam has been taking various steps at the national, regional and international levels to effectively implement the Programme. To date, no incidents of illegal trafficking of small arms and light weapons from or into Viet Nam have been discovered; the number of criminal cases in which small arms and light weapons are used has been minimized. The safety of the people is ensured; small arms and light weapons manufactured domestically are closely managed and properly marked, in accordance with the Government's regulations.

We pledge to continue to work with all Member States to promote international cooperation in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to promote the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Mr. Soler Torrijos (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on having convened this debate on the issue of small arms.

In a world facing the problems of insecurity, hunger and disease, small arms and light weapons are immediate and inexcusable aggravating factors. When we hear about "small arms", the term makes us unconsciously reduce the threat that they represent. Portable weapons, ranging from revolvers to antipersonnel mines, cause between 60 and 90 per cent of the deaths that occur in conflict areas. A great part of the cost in lives is borne by children and non-combatants. Many others are uprooted from their homes and lands.

Wherever we look, the consequences of these small arms are devastating and more lethal than those of other weapon systems; that is why they have been characterized as true weapons of mass destruction. The lack of reliable information, including on the legitimate small arms trade, represents an important challenge to reducing their lethal effects. According to the Small Arms Survey, we know more about statistics and transfers concerning nuclear, chemical and conventional arms than about small arms.

The economic, social and human costs of this problem are undoubtedly greater than the economic gains from the production and sale of these weapons for countries and companies engaged in that industry. The resources used to alleviate the harmful effects of small arms use up scarce commodities that could otherwise be allocated to other economic, social and cultural development projects.

It is appropriately and timely that the Security Council face up to the moral imperative presented by this situation and put an end to this lethal scourge. There are various initiatives that we can consider.

First of all, in the report before us today (S/2008/258), the Secretary-General makes several recommendations that directly concern the work and the mandate of the Security Council. The Council could form an ad hoc working group to study those recommendations. The group could examine other issues, such as the best way to correct the defects in the Programme of Action relevant to the Council's mandate. We could use as a guide the regimes governing the trade in chemical precursors for narcotics and materials for other weapons of mass destruction. With the same resolve, we could promote — and make binding — systems to regulate the production, trade and transfer of small arms.

The Secretary-General informs us that activities related to the illicit trade in small arms have resulted in violations of all the arms embargoes imposed by the Council. That is why we must, in consultations or in the Council's subsidiary organs, examine issues related to the small arms trade whenever we review the implementation of arms embargo regimes and the mandates of peacekeeping missions.

As we are debating here, thousands of victims are dying throughout the world under fire from licensed, illegal or smuggled weapons. Today's debate should serve as a platform that spurs us towards new decisive initiatives to combat the worst effects of the use of small arms.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): First of all, I would like to thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for her exhaustive and informative briefing to the Security Council.

The uncontrolled spread of small arms continues to pose serious problems for human security, development and the protection of human rights around the world. There is an urgent need for the international

community to show courage and unity in addressing this critical issue. In that context, we welcome the continuing efforts of the Security Council aimed at addressing the issue of small arms.

One of the major problems that all post-conflict countries face is the problem of accumulated small arms and light weapons, which can pose a threat to internal and regional security. I would like to stress the importance of this topic and to express our willingness to significantly contribute to addressing it, since Croatia has extensive experience in tackling problems associated with small arms in a post-conflict society.

We regard the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects as a key foundation for the strengthening of global, regional and national actions on the control of small arms and light weapons.

The upcoming biennial meeting to consider national, regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in July this year, is of particular importance, and Croatia supports the approach of having in-depth discussions on a limited number of issues. One of the items on the agenda at the meeting will be the consideration of the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument, which was adopted in 2005. Croatia sees that instrument as an important tool at the disposal of the international community for countering the illicit trade in small arms.

My country supported the resolution calling for the establishment of a task force to prepare an arms trade treaty and thereby supporting international efforts for more effective arms control. Aware of the threat posed by the uncontrolled arms trade, particularly in the light of the effects of war on a society in general, Croatia would support a universal legally binding instrument to regulate the conventional arms trade in all its aspects. In that regard, we welcome the beginning of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts, which held its first session in February this year.

Other efforts aimed at increased international cooperation in the field of small arms are also of great value. In that context, we would like to mention the work that has been done within the framework of the Group of Governmental Experts to consider further steps to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. We attach great importance to the work being done in that Group to consider further steps to enhance cooperation with regard to the issue of surplus conventional ammunition stockpiles.

In the field of the international cooperation at the global level, we would like to note the increasing relevance for small arms of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

At the regional level, we would like to register our support for the many efforts aimed at curbing the proliferation of small arms in South-East Europe. For its part, my country is host to one of the most successful Stability Pact projects, which is playing an important role in this effort: the Regional Arms Control Verification and Implementation Assistance Centre (RACVIAC), located near Zagreb. RACVIAC is helping to define new strategic goals in South-East Europe, which include, among other things, those related to issues such as conventional arms control, enhanced confidence-building measures and strengthening stability and cooperation in South-East Europe, combating terrorism and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the fight against organized crime. One concrete example on small arms was the Conference on Firearms Control Initiatives in South-East Europe, held at RACVIAC on 23 and 24 April 2008.

With regard to Security Council arms embargoes, we are of the opinion that they are powerful tools that can help us address the illicit trade and brokering in small arms. We call upon Member States to respect and fully enforce existing arms embargoes. In that respect, Croatia shares the view of the Secretary-General on the increased potential of arms embargoes as a part of post-conflict peacebuilding.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reiterate its call for continued and increased international cooperation with a view to efficiently addressing the illicit trafficking of small arms. Croatia is ready to support such efforts.

Mr. Belle (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate, which is providing the Security Council with an opportunity to revisit the question of the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms, a matter of great concern. I thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her

introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258).

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the presidency of the European Union, and I shall simply make a few additional comments that I believe to be essential.

In 2006, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan made the alarming observation that "The death toll from small arms dwarfs that of all other weapons systems" (*A/54/2000, para. 238*). Worse still, those victims are primarily civilians: men, women and children who are most often in the most vulnerable sectors of the population. In the report before us today, unfortunately, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon notes no positive developments.

There has been no easing of the gravity of the consequences of proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms, and the need for action is obvious. The international community already has some tools at its disposal. For instance, the embargoes imposed by the Security Council are legally binding and must be strictly applied. The Secretary-General's recommendations regarding cooperation among all actors — the Security Council, peacekeeping missions, Member States and INTERPOL — should also be fully implemented. Belgium welcomes in particular the emphasis placed on the situation of children in armed conflict.

More generally, the illicit trade in small arms can be stemmed only if systematic measures are taken to provide a framework for the legal trade, through mandatory marking and tracing, regulation of the status of brokers and other intermediaries and strengthening export controls. In that spirit, Belgium supports the adoption of an arms trade treaty that would put in place common international norms for the import, export and transfer of conventional weapons.

Belgian law already includes provisions based directly on these concerns. A law adopted on 9 June 2006 imposes strict controls on the possession of weapons by private individuals on Belgian territory. Moreover, the brokerage profession is regulated by a law adopted on 25 March 2003. Belgium's law of 26 March 2003 incorporates the criteria of the European Union Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, thereby making them binding. It is important to note that this law prohibits the exportation of weapons to countries where children are a part of armed forces.

The regional dimension is of equal importance in addressing places of both origin and destination of the illegal trade. Here, Belgium welcomes the follow-up given to the Decision of the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on combating the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons by air, adopted in late 2006.

Belgium is also shouldering its responsibility with respect to cooperation and assistance. Since 2001, we have made more than €7 million in bilateral contributions towards implementing the objectives of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms. That sum is in addition to the contribution of the European Union. In this way, Belgium has supported the formulation of national plans of action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, with a view to promoting cooperation among those three countries, including in the area of border control.

Belgium considers that the third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, to be held in July 2008, should aim at achieving concrete results and should focus on a limited number of topics, with a view to strengthening the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Belgium thanks the Secretary-General for the recommendations set out in his report. Their implementation could help us to better meet the challenge still posed by the illicit trade in small arms. Beyond that challenge itself, development, peace and security in many regions are at stake.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): France fully supports the statement to be made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

Despite what the term "small arms" might suggest, vast damage is caused by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258) describes the long-term destabilization of societies and the plunder of their resources, along with the thousands of victims this trade claims, particularly in Africa. The Secretary-General also stresses something that my Belgian colleague has rightly emphasized and that should be of particular concern to us: among the main

victims of arms trafficking are the most vulnerable members of society: women and children. We must take account of the role and views of women on this issue; the Secretary-General's proposals are particularly welcome in that respect.

The same holds true for children. As members know, France has committed itself unconditionally to working to improve the situation of children in armed conflict and ease their suffering. In that regard combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is of the highest priority.

We are grateful to you, Mr. President, for having organized today's debate on a theme that, in a sense, is at the core of the Council's activities. Beyond the damage already mentioned, the trafficking in small arms and light weapons poses a threat to peace. These weapons threaten the safety and security of United Nations personnel. Their presence is often in direct violation of embargoes imposed by the Security Council, and this justifies the increasing degree to which they are taken into account in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, and in programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and for security sector reform. In this area, the Secretary-General recommends greater synergy among the activities of the Security Council and of all others involved in combating small arms and light weapons. These recommendations are most welcome.

As a nation, France is deeply committed to combating illicit trafficking, and has been for many years. In 2002 we made an active contribution to the drafting and adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms, and we have continued to take action in multilateral forums, first and foremost within the European Union, which has adopted a Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and a Strategy to combat illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, about which my Slovenian colleague will speak.

Moreover, in the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, France has launched an international initiative to combat the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons by air. We know that the traffic in small arms and light weapons makes ready use of air transportation. It is well known that traffickers outwit the vigilance of the authorities by falsifying transport documents, flight plans and aircraft registration, and by taking risks in the air to elude air-traffic controllers. Our initiatives are aimed first and foremost at enhancing the exchange of information, focusing on control provisions and facilitating cooperation in that sphere. Our efforts also seek to promote partnership between air transport companies to identify the optimum measures to be adopted, given the economy of that sector. Finally, we are also seeking to establish a guide of best practices. Air transport is an essential part of that traffic and we hope to put an end to it.

Within the United Nations, we place our hopes in and have resolutely committed ourselves to several initiatives to address various key facets of trafficking. Identifying the source of small arms and light weapons and the traceability and marking of weapons are among the critical aspects of the fight against trafficking. France and Switzerland therefore took the initiative of sponsoring an international instrument adopted in 2005. We had hoped that the instrument would be legally binding, but we welcome the first steps that it has allowed us to take and which point the way for the future.

A second vital target is brokers. We are actively involved in drafting an instrument to combat illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. We know that brokers have become central, inescapable and especially noxious figures in trafficking.

Thirdly, with respect to consumable items, like the Secretary-General we wish to emphasize the importance of keeping munitions and ammunition in mind. We are therefore deeply involved in the group of experts on surplus ammunition.

Finally, with respect to end-users, we welcome the early work of experts on a treaty on the arms trade, a major initiative that will contribute to more responsible management of arms transfers and to improved international cooperation.

None of those efforts should allow us to forget the magnitude of the task ahead. Several essential stages await us, in particular the upcoming Biennial Meeting of the parties. We call on all States to participate and be involved.

In conclusion, I wish to assure the Secretary-General of France's full cooperation in that field. Our cooperation is owed to past and present victims, as is our stability as a guarantor of international peace and security.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for submitting his report on small arms.

The Russian Federation has consistently supported the strengthening of the United Nations role in coordinating the efforts of the international community to resolve the problem of illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We believe that preventing the illegal proliferation of such weapons is especially urgent in the context of the struggle against terrorism and mitigating the consequences of armed conflict.

The United Nations Conference to Review the implementation of the Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, which took place in the summer of 2006, demonstrated that the international community has yet to agree on a unified approach to high-priority measures to combat the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. It is important, however, that the Programme of Action should remain the foundation of such efforts. We are convinced that the Programme of Action has by no means been exhausted and still has potential to be tapped. We expect greater clarity to be introduced in that respect at the Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action, scheduled for July.

We believe that the lack of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action can be explained to a great extent by the lack of financial resources hobbling the developing countries, first and foremost, and by a lack of qualified personnel. However, the dearth of the necessary political will also makes it impossible to regulate that sphere appropriately. Donor assistance to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is often not spent in the best possible way. In our opinion, the problem lies in the slow pace of implementation of the International Tracing Instrument.

In our view, the situation with respect to the submission of annual national reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action is also not entirely favourable. The number of submissions continues to decline steadily from year to year. That is an alarming sign of the possible weakening of States' attention to the problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. At the same time, it would seem obvious that, until that problem is resolved, it will be impossible to achieve the comprehensive settlement of existing conflicts, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, the effective struggle against terrorism, or international security and stability as a whole.

Another thorny aspect are the activities of illegal brokers. Analysis by the Panel of Governmental Experts has shown that only 40 countries have a legislative basis governing brokerage activities. There is a need to impose order in that sphere. The Russian Federation advocates stringent control over brokerage activities and a restricted number of arms brokers. The basis of our approach is our own experience in granting the right to engage in such activities to a single, State-sanctioned intermediary broker.

States still have much to do to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects at the national level, and above all to enhance control over the production and distribution of small arms and light weapons and to strengthen regional cooperation. Unfortunately, we note that, in several regions throughout the world, the situation with respect to the stockpiling of small arms and light weapons, the security of arsenals, the collection and destruction of surplus weapons, and the establishment and implementation of an appropriate legislative basis is not only not improving, but is in fact deteriorating.

In that respect, we favour intensified national and regional efforts to put an end to the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We also attach great importance to the implementation by all countries of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. We believe that waging an effective battle against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons would be assisted by the adoption by the international community of a number of additional measures to prevent weapons from slipping from licit into illicit circulation, in particular measures to end the production of small arms and light weapons using expired licenses or without licences; to ban the transfer of small arms and light weapons to non-State end-users; to promote the verification by exporters of importers' storage and end-use of various types of small arms and light weapons; and to tighten control over re-exports. We intend actively to

promote such measures at the upcoming Biennial Meeting.

A distinct aspect of the problem of small arms and light weapons is strengthening control over man-portable air defence systems in the context of the fight against international terrorism. We believe it advisable to extend the control principles enshrined in a number of international documents, including those adopted in the framework of such regional organizations as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, to all regions of the world.

In conclusion, we affirm the Russian Federation's readiness and potential to render expert assistance, in response to appropriate requests, in problems related to monitoring the distribution of small arms and light weapons and the destruction of surplus weapons. We also express our thanks for the organization and convening of today's debate, which provides yet another opportunity to review the approaches adopted by members of the international community to the most important problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We are ready to continue to work constructively to resolve that issue.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): Let me thank the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her briefing. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on small arms. This report provides a clear picture of the multidimensional and multilevel nature of the challenge of small arms today. It clearly underlines the responsibilities accruing to various organs of the United Nations, including this Council, in addressing these challenges.

The International Committee of the Red Cross estimates that some 90 per cent of recent war casualties have been brought about by small arms. The threat posed by these weapons arises from the widely known fact that they tend to be relatively cheap, portable and easy to conceal. These weapons, therefore, are unfortunately in high demand and are easily accessible in civil wars, terrorism, organized crime and gang warfare. Much monumental human misery may be traced to them.

In a wider context, small arms are not only a security issue, they are also a development issue. Developing countries continue to be threatened by the destruction caused by these weapons and the hindrance such destruction has been to productive economic activities.

In our view, our strategies for dealing with small arms should include not only curbing illicit trade and brokering, but also dealing with existing stockpiles and surpluses of arms and controlling their spread. Such efforts have begun in some places, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and have met with considerable success. Greater effort is needed, with cooperation among Governments and regional actors, to ensure that surplus or excessive small arms are destroyed. Furthermore, global advocacy can contribute in raising public awareness of the importance of addressing those issues and in galvanizing support within countries and regions.

As a subscriber to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, Indonesia finds it both necessary and beneficial to start to develop innovative and robust methods for systematically measuring the scope, scale and distribution of armed violence, as well as its impact, and to develop measurable reductions in armed violence. Indeed, concerted efforts should be pursued to develop economies, eliminate poverty and create sustainable development, particularly in the poor countries that are still fragile and susceptible to the emergence of or relapse into internal conflict.

My delegation is pleased to note the Council's renewed focus on the issue of small arms. The consideration of this issue in the Council, while extremely important on its own, should always be in synergy with that in the General Assembly, which has been seized of this issue. We believe that the Assembly has provided important norm-setting initiatives, including the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects, as well as the development of instruments on international tracing and illicit brokering.

Pursuant to the Security Council request contained in its presidential statement of 29 June 2007 (*S/PRST/2007/24*), the Secretary-General has submitted some far-reaching recommendations, particularly with regard to data collection and development issues, that could be of benefit to this process. In this regard, the Security Council could, for its part, contribute in the ongoing international effort by closely considering those recommendations.

Indonesia believes that one of the most important elements in achieving success in our effort to address this highly complex problem is coherence and cooperation among all relevant bodies, such as Governments, international organizations, the World Bank, the donor community, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society. Such a comprehensive approach will strengthen the full implementation of the Programme of Action.

With regard to the Programme of Action, we support the creation of a common framework for connecting needs with resources in order to enhance the capacity of States to implement the Programme. We find particularly useful the electronic database that the Secretariat is working on for coordinating small arms programming.

With a view to better addressing the challenges brought by small arms, Indonesia is in favour of an early multilateral negotiation to establish a legally binding instrument to curb the illicit transfer of small arms, including ammunition.

While supporting those practical measures, my delegation is also of the view that the legitimate defence and security needs of States should always be taken into account. The inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter, including the right of States to maintain their territorial integrity, should not fall victim to our effort to prevent small arms from falling into the wrong hands. The legitimate rights of sovereign States in acquiring and possessing small arms and Government-to-Government trade relations regarding these weapons should also be guaranteed.

Finally, Indonesia emphasizes that only by concerted action can we reach the goal of reducing the flow of these weapons for use by non-State actors in war, crime and violence throughout the world. Only by persistence, as well as through the visibility that this Council has, can we ensure a brighter future for societies on which small arms have inflicted destruction, or might yet invite damage.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): We thank Ms. Hoppe for her introduction of the Secretary-General's report. The United States believes that the report effectively outlines steps that States need to take and the tools at their disposal to reduce the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons and to enforce United Nations arms embargoes. We particularly note those recommendations in the report that call for concrete actions by States and increased coordination among donors.

The United States has been a key player in the international effort to reduce the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We apply strict controls on weapons transfers, both import and export, including a robust end-user monitoring system, strong controls over brokers and effective stockpile management practices. The United States also continues to render assistance to other States in their efforts to implement the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, as well as the International Tracing Instrument, through our assistance in small arms and light weapons destruction, stockpile security and management, end-user controls and the establishment or strengthening of brokering controls.

In its presidential statements of June 2007, the Security Council laid out concrete steps for States to implement the Programme of Action. In particular, the Council encouraged all States to strengthen physical security and stockpile management, destroy surplus and obsolete small arms and light weapons, ensure that all small arms are marked at the time of manufacture and import, strengthen export and border controls, and control brokering activities. The United States has played an active role in encouraging States to mark all its weapons and trace illicit small arms. We trace nearly 50,000 weapons for foreign law enforcement agencies per year. We have also been active in the implementation of the International Tracing Instrument.

I have a few comments on the Secretary-General's recommendations.

The report stresses the importance of end-user certificates. We are supportive of that approach but would urge States to go one step further and establish a more comprehensive end-user monitoring system. Illicit brokers have proved that a certificate can easily be forged. A robust end-user monitoring system, however, would allow States to conduct physical pre- and post-shipment inspections, as well as random inspections following a weapons shipment to verify that the small arms have not been transferred without prior approval and are being used as intended. The recipient State would be responsible for establishing

sound customs and import procedures in order to verify the accuracy of the shipment.

Illicit brokering was also highlighted in the report. The United States participated actively in the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on brokering. We would urge States to take a close look at the recommendations put forward by the Group. If implemented, those recommended provisions could go a long way in reducing arms embargo violations and other illicit transfers.

The report also makes frequent reference to possible areas for Security Council action with respect to arms embargoes. Almost all examples and recommendations in the report are drawn from the most difficult and complex cases which have involved both embargoes and peacekeeping missions in countries or areas where there has been a complete or near-complete breakdown in civil order. There is a legal maxim that says "hard cases do not make good law". We should not look to those most difficult and complex cases as a source of rules for general application in future arms embargoes and/or peacekeeping operations.

Moreover, the report implies that it is the principal duty of the Security Council or its components or of peacekeeping missions set up under its authority to enforce arms embargoes. It is not. Enforcement of arms embargoes is primarily a duty of States Members of the United Nations. It is our view that the establishment of comprehensive national laws and regulations is key to the enforcement of arms embargoes and sanctions and is the cornerstone for the reduction of illicit small arms and light weapons proliferation. However, we would caution against actions that increase the burden on States through additional studies and mandates, since more assistance, not more reports and meetings, is required for the international community to reach our common goal.

We would also caution against efforts at standardizing practices without some indication that such standardization will be effective at combating the illicit trade or do not duplicate already existing and effective regional best practices.

Finally, the United States welcomes the inclusion of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission in the report's consideration of ways to address small arms issues in peacebuilding efforts. We want to see the Peacebuilding Commission succeed in its role of marshalling support for sustainable peacekeeping. We welcome greater coordination that helps reduce the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I join colleagues in welcoming this debate and in thanking the Secretary-General for preparing a thought-provoking and challenging report. I would also like to thank the Deputy to the High Representative for her intervention. I would like to associate my delegation with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union later in this debate.

As we approach the Third Biennial Meeting of States, this debate is an important opportunity to highlight small arms issues. The United Kingdom is committed to taking an active role in this process. We have submitted comprehensive implementation reports for both the United Nations Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. Through you, Mr. President, I would encourage all Member States to do the same as soon as possible.

We regret the lack of consensus at the 2006 Biennial Meeting of States. This year's event is an important opportunity for the United Nations to revitalize its leadership in tackling the global problem of illicit small arms and light weapons. The United Kingdom hopes that all Member States can agree that we should restore the reputation of the United Nations as the pre-eminent forum for controlling and curbing the illicit spread of small arms and light weapons.

For this reason, we should all aim to conclude the Biennial Meeting of States with agreement on a practical outcome document. This document should set the framework for work over subsequent years, highlight best practices in implementing the United Nations Programme of Action and identify areas where greater attention is needed.

The irresponsible trade in arms holds back development and perpetuates inequality, fuels conflict and results in many people around the world being injured, killed or subjected to human rights abuses. The United Kingdom is committed to action to stop this trade. My Government has provided around $60 million since 2001 to support conflict prevention by addressing long-term structural causes of conflict and supporting post-conflict reconstruction.

In 2007 and 2008, the United Kingdom assisted non-governmental organizations and United Nations partners to collect and destroy weapons, develop and implement national and regional control agreements and undertake public awareness campaigns. My Government continues to take a leading role in the development of globally agreed high standards of international regulation of the trade in all conventional arms. We are committed to working with partners at home and abroad to bring a halt to irresponsible trading in conventional weapons.

The key priority for the United Kingdom is the creation of an effective arms trade treaty to help prevent the irresponsible international sale and transfer of conventional weapons. We welcome the useful discussions at the first session of the Group of Government Experts on an Arms Trade Treaty in February of this year and we look forward to continuing that work at the second session later next month.

The United Kingdom is also fully committed to the other areas of United Nations work relating to small arms and light weapons. We welcome the recommendations contained in the report by the Group of Government Experts and have considered further steps to enhance international cooperation to combat illicit brokering of small arms and light weapons. We are active members of the ongoing Group of Government Experts on ammunitions issues. We are assisting efforts to improve stockpile management and security. We strongly support the development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

We must not close our eyes to the negative impact of illicit small arms and light weapons. I agree very much with what the representative of Indonesia said on this subject. As the Secretary-General's report sets out in its opening pages, illicit small arms adversely affect security, human rights and social and economic development. These are issues at the very core of the Charter of the United Nations. That is why we believe that continued work on these issues by the members of this Council and by the wider membership of the United Nations is imperative.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I thank Ms. Hoppe for her briefing. While aligning ourselves with the statement that Slovenia is going to make on behalf of the European Union, we welcome the initiative by South Africa to hold this debate on small arms and light weapons. The report of the Secretary-General — for which we are grateful — is proof that the decision of the Security Council to put this issue back on its agenda has been timely and appropriate.

The Secretary-General's report confirms that the uncontrolled dissemination of small arms and light weapons fuels armed conflicts and criminal violence, claims a very heavy toll in human lives, contributes to human rights violations and seriously hinders global and regional stability as well as economic recovery in post-conflict areas.

For this reason, Italy attaches traditional priority to the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, consistent with the related 2005 European Union Strategy and the 2003 European Union Common Position on the control of arms brokering.

The multifaceted nature of this threat requires a holistic response aimed at enhancing synergies among all relevant forums and initiatives. Italy welcomes the direct involvement of the Security Council through its arms embargoes and the related monitoring tasks assigned to some peacekeeping missions.

We also support the implementation of the United Nations Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and the Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. In that respect, I wish to recall that in February 2008 the European Union adopted a joint action that allocated €300,000 to promote compliance with the latter.

Thus, Italy looks forward to a successful outcome of the Third Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action and stands by the efforts of the President-designate, Ambassador Čekuolis, to focus deliberations on a few crucial areas such as international cooperation, brokering, tracing and stockpile management, with a view to identifying outstanding implementation challenges.

Italy is convinced that further work should be done to strengthen national, regional and global regulations on small arms and light weapons brokering,

transfers controls and end-user certifications. Italy also favours making the political commitments of the Programme of Action and of the tracing instrument legally binding.

We deem it important to increase cooperation with international organizations that have developed practices of interest relevant to the common goal of eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Noteworthy initiatives also take place at the regional level. For instance, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's handbook of best practices on small arms and light weapons offers comprehensive terms of reference for national legislation.

No solution to the destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons can be effective if it is limited to the political and security aspects only. It is imperative to consider the issue also from the perspective of economic and social development. Projects concerning small arms and light weapons must be fully integrated in national development strategies in post-conflict countries.

The Peacebuilding Commission can play a decisive role in addressing this problem through the integrated strategic frameworks for peacebuilding elaborated with local authorities, which should include — whenever appropriate — programmes concerning the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, as well as youth unemployment.

In a broader perspective, it is necessary to foster international cooperation to that end, bearing in mind the need to devote attention to gender approaches, women and children often being the actual victims of small arms and light weapons. Finally, we took note with interest of the initiative undertaken by the United Nations Coordinating Action on Small Arms to draft common standards applicable to multilateral and national projects in the field of small arms and light weapons.

Facing one of the main threats to global and regional security, we all need to show our common purpose and steadfast resolve. The Security Council and the international community can rely on Italy's active support and contribution.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate. We would like to thank Ms. Hannelore Hoppe of the Office for Disarmament Affairs for her introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258).

We are glad to note that the issue of small arms has received full attention from the Security Council. Several open debates have been held and a number of presidential statements adopted. The Security Council has always stressed the importance of addressing this problem as it reviews such issues as the protection of civilians, women and children in armed conflict. This emphasis has played an important role in effectively reducing illicit trafficking of small arms and enhancing regional peace and stability.

China supports the Security Council's continued important role on the small arms issue, in accordance with its mandate. In addressing this issue, the Security Council should coordinate with other United Nations bodies so as to complement and promote the work of all actors.

The excessive accumulation and illicit trafficking of small arms have exacerbated conflicts in many countries and regions, disrupted peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction and abetted terrorism, drug trafficking and other criminal activities, thus causing negative political, economic and social impact.

The issue of small arms has drawn increasing attention from the international community. In recent years, the international community has made many efforts and achieved some progress in seeking solutions. The Firearms Protocol, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects were both concluded in 2001. They have provided a legal and policy basis for addressing this problem. Since then, international efforts to combat the illicit trade in small arms have intensified, as evidenced by the successful Biennial Meetings, the timely conclusion of the International Instrument on marking and tracing small arms and light weapons and the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons (see A/62/163).

Although no final document was adopted at the 2006 United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action, the Programme of Action still provides

important guidance for international endeavour to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Parties concerned have also made continued efforts to promote comprehensive implementation of the Programme of Action.

The third Biennial Meeting on small arms and light weapons will be held in July this year in New York. The meeting will review the implementation of the Programme of Action at the international, regional and national levels and that of the International Instrument on marking and tracing illicit small arms and light weapons. This represents an important opportunity for the parties concerned to share experiences and promote comprehensive implementation of the Programme of Action. We look forward to a successful outcome of the meeting.

The Chinese Government has all along attached great importance to combating illicit trafficking of small arms. We have taken an active part in international endeavours in this field. In recent years, China has adopted a series of specific measures in the areas of domestic legislation, law enforcement and capacity- and institution-building. We have earnestly implemented the Programme of Action.

At the same time, we have actively participated in international exchanges and cooperation by holding international seminars, providing assistance, within our capabilities, to countries and regions concerned and maintaining regular operational contacts with the relevant departments of other countries and international organizations.

China is of the view that comprehensive and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and other relevant international instruments, strengthened capacity-building of countries in the areas in question and continued promotion of multilateral processes for combating the illicit trade in small arms are of great significance in maintaining regional stability, promoting economic development and building a harmonious world of lasting peace.

China will continue to increase dialogue and cooperation with parties concerned and will work for the early eradication of the scourge of the illicit trade in small arms.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of South Africa.

We too would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2008/258) and Ms. Hoppe, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, for presenting the report.

The Secretary-General characterizes the issue of small arms and light weapons as complex, because it has a direct bearing on a number of other important policy areas such as sustainable development, human rights, poverty and underdevelopment. It is clear that this scourge has an impact on mandates within the United Nations system and requires attention at the national, subregional, regional and international levels if it is to be effectively addressed.

In other words, small arms and light weapons have become the weapons of choice for the warlords, who have been able to recruit children as their preferred soldiers in some intractable conflicts, particularly in Africa. That is one of the fundamental reasons that we asked the Security Council to hold this debate. In Africa, our people die more from small arms than from any other weapon.

United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted by the General Assembly in 2001, remains the central global instrument to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The Programme of Action represented a hard-won compromise among some very divergent views on the issue of the undertakings to be included. A number of States, including South Africa, would have preferred the Programme of Action to be far more encompassing, but other Member States accepted what was attainable during the first universal consideration of this important issue, in 2001. We hope we can attain more concrete results in the upcoming Biennial Meeting to be held in July.

The full implementation of the Programme of Action in all its aspects should remain central to our national, subregional, regional and international efforts to address this scourge. The Programme of Action provides for international assistance and cooperation, as well as for the coordination of efforts which, along with the issue of stockpile management, brokering and the international tracing instrument, will be key focus areas of the upcoming third Biennial Meeting of States on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. We believe it is important for

the General Assembly, which holds the primary responsibility to oversee and monitor the implementation of the Programme of Action, to also consider these recommendations.

Nonetheless, South Africa believes that the issue of small arms and light weapons has a direct bearing on two aspects of the Security Council's mandate: arms embargoes and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts. Guided by our commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts, we support arms embargoes that contribute to lasting peace and stability. The mandates of peacekeeping operations handed down through Security Council resolutions, therefore, need to be backed up with the system-wide resources of the United Nations to ensure that the DDR components of these mandates are sufficiently sustainable and are carried out effectively.

In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendations to the Security Council on the need for increased practical cooperation between all the relevant international and regional components involved in peacekeeping missions. The Security Council will need to consider ways to strengthen the synergies between arms embargoes and DDR efforts, as well as the creation of dedicated units within peacekeeping missions, not only to monitor arms embargoes, but also to address DDR issues.

While we are pleased that this debate has provided an opportunity for members of the General Assembly and the Security Council to debate and refine our common understanding of these issues, we still believe that the Security Council also has a responsibility to review how small arms and light weapons can contribute negatively to the maintenance of international peace and security.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

Before I give the floor to the next speaker, I would kindly remind all speakers of the five-minute rule, to which we have tried very hard to adhere.

I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): As we have been asked to be brief, I will start by merely thanking the Security Council for the opportunity to take part in this open debate. I wish also to say how much we appreciated Ms. Hannelore Hoppe's introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258). Delegations know how sensitive this question is and how much importance my delegation attaches to it, as demonstrated during our most recent membership of the Council. Thus, after quite some time, it is good to see that this organ has renewed its interest in this question and has convened this meeting.

Previous speakers have been eloquent in their reflections on this problem, which is becoming increasingly urgent. The threat posed by the illicit trade in small arms is a matter of concern to the entire international community. At the same time, small arms seem to be the weapons of choice in most of the conflicts addressed by the Security Council. The wide availability of such arms and their ammunition in many regions is one of the main causes of insecurity and poverty, as well as a factor that fuels many conflicts. For that reason, we believe that synergies between United Nations arms embargoes and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities should be strengthened.

It is almost nine years since the Security Council first addressed the question of small arms; yet we still have a great deal to do in our efforts in prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. However, this is a complex and multidimensional problem involving security, conflict prevention and resolution, crime prevention and humanitarian and development issues, among other dimensions. It also calls for joint action by the States, intergovernmental organizations and civil society, at all levels.

The report of the Secretary-General stresses the need for the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Peacebuilding Commission consider ways to increase and improve their interaction on questions linked to this matter, with a view to promoting the formulation of long-term conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies, and in order to identify existing links among the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, the illicit exploitation of natural and other resources and armed conflict.

I would like to reiterate my country's position on what we believe are priority elements for an integrated and comprehensive strategy to respond to the challenge posed by this problem. First, there is a need to strengthen international cooperation and assistance, and to build capacities, including through technical and

financial assistance, to support and facilitate local, national, regional and global efforts to combat this scourge. It is necessary also to address questions related to marking and tracing, control of arms transfers, illicit brokering and ammunition, just to mention a few. To that end, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has become a basic instrument to prevent conflicts, to attain peace and stability and to encourage predictable and transparent conduct by States.

Finally, I would like to reaffirm the support of my delegation for the initiatives enabling us to address the various dimensions of this problem, such as the convening of this open debate. Argentina will continue to work with resolve to contribute to this endeavour.

The President: Let me indicate that we are honoured to have followed up on the Argentine delegation's work on this issue in the Council. I promised the predecessor of the representative of Argentina that when we became a member of the Council, we would follow-up on this issue.

I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation congratulates South Africa on its assumption of the Presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and on having convened this meeting.

Mexico attaches particular importance to this open debate on the question of small arms because of the serious impact that the illicit trade and use of these weapons by organized crime has on our national security and on stability in the region.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/258) — and we would like to thank Ms. Hoppe for her introduction — clearly illustrates the evil cycle of the use of these arms. Its quotation, in paragraph 8, from the *Small Arms Survey* is revealing: "more is known about the number of nuclear warheads, stocks of chemical weapons and transfers of major conventional weapons than about small arms." As a consequence, we do not have accurate data on the number of these weapons circulating around the world. According to one estimate, there could be at least 875 million. This lack of precision is serious enough on its own, but we must add the fact that this is the only category of arms not under State monopoly but that is in the hands of private individuals. Moreover, to the licensed production, estimated at 7.5 million to 8 million arms per year, we must add the illicit production, which encompasses countries in conflict or with scarce resources. The circle of the lack of control is completed by illicit trade and brokering and by the tremendous disparities in national legislation for regulation of civilian possession.

As affirmed by the Secretary-General, small arms are the weapons of choice in civil conflicts, as well as in terrorism, organized crime and common crime. Latin America is one of the regions of the world that have been most affected by the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons to common criminals and members of transnational organized crime; unfortunately, it is the region where the highest number of firearm-related deaths are concentrated.

The illegal flow of weapons in this category is a decisive factor in the crises that the Council regularly addresses, since it contributes to instability not only within States, but also at the subregional and regional levels. In Latin America, and certainly in Mexico, we see in particular the damage caused by organized crime linked to drug trafficking, which uses these weapons in its daily operations.

Combating the illegal flow of small arms requires a comprehensive approach, which must include various levels, from joint action at the multilateral level to subregional, national and social action. One ongoing issue that we must resolve is, without a doubt, the disparity in national legislation regulating civilian possession. It is an obvious fact that what cannot be acquired in one country can be acquired with relative ease in a neighbouring country, just by crossing the border.

The root of the problem is that weapons acquired as a result of laws that prevent the State from exercising control over them are able to cross borders, giving rise to security problems that affect not only the recipient countries, but also the country of origin itself. The situation becomes even more complicated when organized crime intervenes and establishes the link between drugs and weapons. Hence, the importance of bilateral and regional cooperation and coordination mechanisms, which are gradually being improved and which have produced encouraging results.

Under these circumstances, the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons must be a

priority for the international community, as it is for the Government of Mexico.

Mexico considers as highly useful the biennial presentation of the Secretary-General's report on small arms, which virtually coincides with the Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We have supported full implementation of the Programme of Action and have maintained our firm support for the follow-up mechanisms and resolutions adopted in the General Assembly on this issue. In our most recent national report, we presented data reflecting the securing and destruction of weapons as well as exchange programmes for collection from the civilian population. All of this is accompanied by large-scale operations against organized crime and by awareness-raising campaigns to prevent the illicit possession, transfer or use of firearms. That is why we support recommendation 11 in the Secretary-General's report that the Security Council should encourage States to adopt measures to cooperate in verifying end-user certificates, which prevent the diversion of weapons.

Mexico, together with many other countries in the region, has emphasized that it is vitally important that the marking and tracing instrument become legally binding. We also urge that it include norms relating to ammunition control. However, there has been no consensus, despite the inherent link to the problem of small arms and light weapons.

Mexico believes that there are still many aspects on which States can continue to work, thereby strengthening the Programme of Action. These include international cooperation on marking and tracing, the adoption of measures to regulate brokering and the use of end-user certificates, and proper management and control of stockpiles.

Furthermore, we recognize, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, that the Programme of Action, despite its undeniable importance, suffers from significant weaknesses, beginning with the fact that it is not legally binding and does not address the issue of the illicit ammunition trade. Mexico regrets that it hardly refers to the issue of irresponsible civilian weapons possession or to the effects of these weapons in humanitarian terms.

Finally, my delegation cannot fail to agree with the Secretary-General as to the economic and social impact that conflicts, or just the situation of insecurity and instability, can have on the development and prosperity of any nation. The amount of resources that must be diverted by States to combat the illicit small arms trade and its consequences represents enormous and unfair costs to society. The major producers of these weapons must shoulder their responsibility and increase the number of measures to control their production and, above all, their export. The idea of an international arms trade treaty is a good initiative that Mexico has supported enthusiastically, but that is still far from being implemented. Therefore, we shall continue to stress the importance of the issue that we are considering today.

The President: I now call on the representative of Israel.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel): At the outset, allow me, Sir, on this, your last day — for the moment — as President of the Security Council, to congratulate you and to thank you for your able stewardship of the Council during this month and for convening this important debate. I also wish to thank Ms. Hoppe for her informative briefing.

More than 640 million small arms and light weapons — whenever we talk about "SALW", I think that the "L" could also stand for "lethal", and not just "light", weapons — and 16 billion rounds of ammunition are in circulation today across the globe, with an additional 8 million new weapons entering the market each year. Most present-day conflicts are fought primarily with these weapons, and they are used in civil wars, terrorism, organized crime and gang warfare. Moreover, civilians are often those most affected and endangered by them.

Israel views the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and in particular the transfer of those weapons to terrorists, as an imminent threat to international peace and security. Therefore, my delegation welcomes the report submitted by the Secretary-General on small arms (S/2008/258) and wishes to express its support in particular for the Secretary-General's proposal that the Coordinating Action on Small Arms be revived as one of the priorities in the field of disarmament for this year.

Israel has consistently placed high on its agenda the issue of preventing the illicit proliferation of small

arms and light weapons. We strongly believe that harmonized cooperation and coordination at the global, regional, subregional and bilateral levels would enhance the ongoing international efforts to prevent proliferation and combat terrorism. In our opinion, the best way to curb illicit arms proliferation is through strong national commitment and determination. In that regard, Israel's small arms and light weapons export control policy includes tight controls aimed at, inter alia, the prohibition of exports to regions or States under Security Council arms sales embargoes, non-State entities, subversive and underground movements, terrorist or guerrilla groups, criminal organizations and areas of ongoing internal armed conflict.

In our region, the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons presents a growing danger, owing to the role of terrorist organizations. The terrorism and violence carried out by extremists against Israel, and against Israeli civilians in particular, is enabled by the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons to terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the Palestinian areas and Hizbullah in Lebanon. While State sponsorship of terrorism is not a new challenge for the international community per se, the increase in size, operational capacity and military technology of non-State actors reminds us time and time again that terrorist organizations cannot exist without the support of States.

Two extremist States in our region, Syria and Iran, are heavily invested in transferring a variety of weapons to Hizbullah in Lebanon, among them small arms and light weapons. In addition to providing weapons, Iran also trains terrorists in operational methods. Scores of Hizbullah and Hamas terrorists have been sent for training in Iran in recent months alone. The international community must press for an end to State sponsorship of terrorism.

The security situation has therefore required my Government to spare no effort in combating and preventing terrorist organizations from acquiring small arms and light weapons, especially man-portable air defence systems, mines and improvised explosive devices, ammunition and explosives. Those arms are used by all terrorist organizations in our region to launch attacks targeting, both indiscriminately and intentionally, innocent civilians. The daily attempts to smuggle small arms and light weapons by land via underground tunnels and through abusing humanitarian convoys underscores the significance of the threat.

Let us not forget that small arms and light weapons pose a threat not only to States and their civilians, but also to the peacekeepers who are often deployed to areas where the illicit transfer of weapons takes place. The Council is aware of numerous incidents over the past few years. I wish to point to one in particular, which occurred in southern Lebanon just last month — as detailed in paragraph 24 of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004), contained in document S/2008/264 — in which a patrol of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon encountered unidentified armed elements in its area of operation. In that case, Hizbullah and its supporters who enable the small arms and light weapons to reach the terrorists both posed a grave danger to peacekeepers and the fulfilment of their mandate, as indicated by this very Council.

Israel welcomed the adoption of the Programme of Action at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2001. The Programme of Action has contributed significantly to international arms control efforts in the past few years by raising the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons to a higher priority. The 2006 Review Conference reiterated the key role of the Programme of Action. However, Israel, like other delegations, regrets that the Conference was not able to achieve a consensus document.

Israel actively participated in the negotiations leading to the successful conclusion of the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. The implementation of the Instrument, as well as the Programme of Action, would contribute to reducing human suffering if carried out by all States. For Israel, as well as for other States in our region and around the world, the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action has become more relevant than ever. As such, we look forward to the coming Biennial Meeting on the Programme of Action in New York in July, and we support the Secretary-General's call for an operational and action-oriented meeting. We hope that the Security Council will be very vigilant in not allowing that vital issue to be politicized, as seems to be the aim of at least one member of the Council. We consider it to be a

fundamental and crucial step towards progress in the peace process.

Due to that commitment, Israel is ready to continue the efforts to identify standards for transfer control to reduce the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Such standards could include the implementation of the marking and tracing instrument, full compliance with the Security Council's arms embargos, the assessment of the risk of diversion to illicit end users, a ban on the transfer of man-portable air defence systems to non-State actors, satisfactory management and control of stockpiles, as well as other similar measures.

When addressing the relationship between illicit arms and maintaining international peace and security, we tend to focus on statistics and figures to bolster our call for action, but we must remember that behind each victim affected by the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons — be it in armed conflict, civil strife or terrorism — is the face and name of a loved one, now lost to his or her dear family and friends forever. While the discussions on small arms and light weapons are largely technical, their consequences are overwhelmingly humanitarian. Hence, the lesson for the international community is clear. Whatever disagreements exist on technical matters, dragging our feet on regulation — and worse, continuing to allow the illicit trade of small arms and lethal light weapons and State sponsorship of terrorism — will only exacerbate the threats posed to civilians.

For States to fulfil their obligations to their citizens and ensure their safety and security, there must be a collective resolve to prevent the emergence of situations in which small arms and light weapons and other weapons aggressively threaten civilian populations. Israel, for its part, is prepared to engage with the international community in promoting appropriately robust arms regimes and in ensuring the safety and security of all citizens of the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

First of all, let me thank you, Sir, for convening this debate. I would also like to thank the Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for her presentation of the report of the Secretary-General.

In the interests of time, the European Union will shorten its statement. The full version is being distributed and constitutes our official statement.

The European Union sees the proliferation, widespread availability and illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition as among the most dangerous challenges and threats to global stability and security, as well as to economic and social development and prosperity. The easy availability of small arms and light weapons, their associated ammunition and explosives is a fuelling factor for the vast majority of conflicts.

In December 2005, the European Union developed its fully-fledged strategy to combat the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition. The EU small arms and light weapons strategy places under a single heading all the instruments, political and financial, at the disposal of the Union to fight the scourge that the illicit traffic of those weapons represents. The EU remains a major contributor to the fight against the dissemination of illicit small arms and light weapons and ammunition. In Africa, for example, the EU is financially supporting many actions in the field of small arms and light weapons, including stockpile destruction.

The EU will continue to provide support, financial and technical, to Governments, non-governmental organizations and regional organizations and arrangements engaged in the fight against small arms and light weapons trafficking and misuse, and the elimination of dangerous small arms and ammunition stockpiles.

We are committed to curbing the uncontrolled spread and misuse of small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, which cause hundreds of thousands of human deaths every year. We have committed ourselves to addressing that problem through the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms

and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We will need to assess together our achievements and shortcomings in implementing the Programme of Action, which plays a vital role in stemming small arms and light weapons proliferation.

In July this year, States will convene for the third Biennial Meeting to consider the national, regional and global implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. We strongly support the approach of focused and results-oriented consideration of a few issues with a view to enhancing the implementation of the Programme of Action. We call upon all Member States to participate in this important event and stress the need for a continued process at the global level on small arms and light weapons.

In this regard, the EU also welcomes the latest report of the Secretary-General on small arms (S/2008/258). We strongly believe that the General Assembly's mandate to the Secretary-General to submit a report on implementation of the Programme of Action will greatly facilitate further consideration of implementation by all Member States as well as preparations for Biennial Meetings of States.

The EU welcomes the Security Council's continuing engagement on the issue of small arms. We share the view that, in order to make real progress in preventing, combating and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, States should focus on the strengthening, in particular, of physical security and stockpile management; destruction of surpluses; marking and tracing; strengthening export and border controls; and controlling brokering activities. States need to curb opportunities for the diversion of licit weapons and ammunition to illicit markets.

We are confident that the Security Council will continue to pay particular attention to small arms and light weapons, and we call on all States to do their utmost to contribute to the fight against this scourge, which kills thousands of people every day. The EU will continue to play its part in this common endeavour.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Honduras.

Mr. Reina Idiaquez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to take part, for the first time, in a Security Council meeting, one focusing on small arms and light weapons and their negative impact on economic and social development in many developing countries, on a consideration of this complex problem and on a review of our action to make it possible to decide how to avert the destructive, inhumane effects of these weapons and reduce the violence to which they give rise in economically disadvantaged countries and societies.

I congratulate you, Sir, on this important initiative during your presidency of the Council during the month of April.

It is a fact that small arms and light weapons have the most devastating impact in the poorest and economically most disadvantaged countries. Past conflict in the Central American region has led to the presence of incalculable quantities of weapons, both commercial and military, that are neither controlled nor registered. Their price is low, they are easy to transport, store and trade illegally. Most such weapons are disseminated through clandestine distribution nodes, and they are used by criminal groups and organizations seeking to undermine social order, which use them, indiscriminately, against civilians.

Honduras has not been spared the negative effects of such weapons, and our Government has had to adopt national, regional and international measures to address a long-standing problem that has compromised national security in many countries. At the national level, over the past approximately five years, our authorities have focused on ensuring strict compliance with national legislation to regulate the civilian possession of weapons and to set up a reliable database on the quantity of such weaponry in our country. At present, more than 151,000 small arms and light weapons have been registered at the national level. But, despite Government commitment and joint efforts with civil society, it has been impossible to exercise total control of these weapons.

The question of arms trafficking is a complex one to begin with, and it is made more so by regional organized crime in Central America, which takes advantage of the free movement of persons, goods and capital to transport arms of various sizes, with criminal intent. This clearly indicates that the problem goes beyond the national framework and must therefore be addressed at the regional and subregional levels. Additionally, a matter of key importance from the strategic point of view is that the strengthening of democracy in Central America saw the demobilization of portions of the regular armies. This demobilization

process was not carried out properly; it left thousands of officers and tens of thousands of soldiers unemployed and without resources. This had the negative effect of abandoning what we might call qualified labour; some such people ended up being recruited into organized crime.

From this, we learn that, if not carried out properly, the praiseworthy process of democratization and army demobilization in Central America can have negative impacts. Central America's experience shows what should not be done.

At the regional level, in the framework of the Organization of American States, Honduras has signed the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, which entered into force in 1998 in the Latin American region. Thus, in a regional context, we are seeking to put in place substantive measures to facilitate cooperation among States, including through, inter alia, better exchanges of information and experience in the areas of categorization of crimes; marking of weapons; verification of licenses for arms imports; and technical cooperation and assistance. My country, Honduras, endorsed the Antigua Guatemala Declaration of the Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean States for the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.

Within the United Nations system, we are party to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. We understand the scope of the Protocol and the Convention and the commitments we have undertaken.

I wish in conclusion to emphasize that we are taking part in this debate in a constructive spirit; through the Council, we reaffirm our commitment to and support for the Office for Disarmament Affairs and its activities in this sphere. We also hail Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his spirit of renewal and his vigorous action to promote the fulfilment of international commitments on small arms and light weapons.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to express my appreciation to you for having convened today's debate on small arms. We are grateful also to Ms. Hannelore Hoppe for her introduction of the Secretary-General's report on small arms (S/2008/258). The report serves as a valuable guidepost for our discussion.

Conflicts are now fought primarily with small arms and light weapons. The international community must make every effort to end the illicit trade in small arms in order to bring about peace and development in post-conflict countries.

The question of small arms and light weapons requires a multidisciplinary approach, as they threaten human security at the nexus of peace and development. The widespread use of small arms results in a large number of casualties and prolongation of armed conflicts. It also gives rise to socio-economic problems such as child soldiers and disruption of post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery efforts.

Japan has already participated actively in United Nations efforts to tackle the issue of small arms and light weapons and has taken the initiative to promote a General Assembly resolution on this issue almost every year since 1995. Since 2001 we have worked together with Colombia and South Africa for the same cause.

We are convinced that it is essential to implement effectively the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Within this framework, Japan welcomes in particular the adoption of the International Tracing Instrument in 2005 and the submission of the report on illicit brokering by the Group of Governmental Experts in 2007 (*A/62/163* and *Corr.1*).

The most important task before us in this context is to make real progress in implementing the Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument. For that purpose I suggest two things. First, we should make full use of the biennial review of the implementation of the Programme of Action at the meeting of States. We hope that the third biennial meeting of States, in July, will be successful, because it would provide an opportunity for substantive and action-oriented discussion on priority issues such as international cooperation and assistance, illicit

brokering, stockpile management and disposal of surplus. Secondly, international cooperation and assistance should be strengthened to support the needs of countries and regional organizations in building their capacity.

For our part, Japan has been active in supporting promotion of the International Tracing Instrument, including supporting the recent subregional workshop for Central and West Africa. Japan has also assisted projects in many countries, including in Asia and Africa, to build national, regional and subregional capacity for collection; stockpile management and destruction of illicit small arms and light weapons; import and export controls; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and security sector reform.

Regional and subregional dimensions need to be strengthened and emphasized for effective implementation. Most recently, through the Economic Community of West African States, we supported the establishment of national commissions in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to tackle the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In selecting and implementing projects, we should coordinate more effectively to match the needs of States with available resources and to achieve tangible results.

I would like to touch on another effort to end the illicit trade and to regulate the transfer of small arms. As a non-exporter of weapons, Japan attaches importance to transfer controls to prevent the illicit trade of small arms and light weapons. We therefore support the initiative to promote a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms. An arms trade treaty would be a valuable initiative in that regard.

We welcome the fact that the Security Council continues to pay utmost attention to the illicit trade in small arms as one important cause of insecurity, with valuable input from the Secretary-General.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Mubari-Muita (Kenya): Thank you for giving me the floor, Mr. President, and for convening this important open debate on the agenda item on small arms. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General containing his analysis, observations and recommendations.

My delegation notes with great concern that the ready availability and easy handling of small arms continue to fuel conflicts and undermine development, human rights and security in the world, particularly in Africa. In the African continent small arms could be said to be weapons of mass destruction, judging by the number of deaths that they are directly and indirectly responsible for.

The circulation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons in the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and all the neighbouring States have played a significant role in undermining peace, intensifying violence and crime and fuelling regional wars. Consequently, all those factors have had harmful socio-economic effects, especially given that security and development are inextricably interlinked. Indeed, at this rate it is little wonder that the African continent may not achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), due in part to the challenges posed by the problems associated with small arms.

As part of the programme to combat the menace of small arms, the countries of the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa region issued the Nairobi Declaration in the year 2000, thereby establishing the Secretariat on Small Arms as a regional platform for containing the problem of proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In June 2005 the Third Ministerial Review Conference of the Nairobi Declaration adopted an agreement transforming the Secretariat into the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA).

RECSA has done considerable work in coordinating and in assisting member States to implement the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and relevant resolutions and instruments related to small arms and light weapons. It has also been successful in coordinating interaction with national focal points, regional and international agencies, civil society and research institutions, as well as in capacity-building and information sharing. The political will, ownership and partnership among member States have ensured concrete and practical achievements towards the Centre's noble objectives.

At the national level, the Kenya National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which brings

together government and civil society, is operational, with the assistance of RECSA. Its Secretariat has in the last five years improved its capacity and expanded its mandate to include peacebuilding, conflict management and implementation of the Conflict Early Warning Mechanism of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, well as promotion of community-based policing.

At the global level, the international community must agree on practical measures to control the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which continue to cause the death and destabilization of hundreds of thousands of civilians. As part of concrete measures to combat the proliferation of small arms, Kenya, with other like-minded countries, has been at the forefront in supporting the resolution on the arms trade treaty. We deem important that the international community put in place a mechanism for responsible trade in these weapons through a legally binding instrument establishing international standards for the import, export and transfer of small arms. Kenya is convinced that an arms trade treaty is feasible and timely. It is a matter of survival for the communities in our part of the world, and thus I implore other Member States to join in this noble cause.

Further, Kenya reaffirms its support for the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. In this connection, we support the work of the Governmental Group of Experts in their efforts to enhance international cooperation in preventing, combating and eradicating illicit brokering in small arms and light weapons. Kenya urges other Member States to remain actively engaged in efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that in order to address successfully the challenges posed by small arms, a coordinated response at the global, regional, national and local levels is required, and that all delegations need to work together in a spirit of cooperation. This is not an affront to international trade in arms, but a question of being responsible traders and consumers. The safety of communities in regions awash with small arms is crucial, as is, ultimately, the achievement of the internationally agreed objectives, including the MDGs. Time is not on our side.

The President: I now call on the representative of Benin.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to extend to you, Mr. President, our sincere congratulations on the work that you have doing over the month of your presidency. Your actions were appreciated in this forum. I would also like to express the great appreciation of the Government of Benin to the Secretary-General for this comprehensive and analytical report on the complex issue of small arms and light weapons, which was introduced to us by Ms. Hannelore Hoppe, Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Small arms and light weapons continue to have a tragic impact on the course of contemporary history. Their steady proliferation makes them a genuine scourge in terms of the large number of human lives that they claim every year. These weapons have become veritable weapons of mass destruction in very real terms. Small arms help to make States fragile. They encourage the emergence of harmful phenomena that hamper the efforts of the international community to advance sustainable human development.

We thank the Secretary-General for having summarized, in his highly instructive report, the bold actions undertaken within the framework of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. A number of relatively new trends which are highlighted in the report are of the greatest concern to us. I shall cite a few of them in support of my reasoning.

First of all, let us note that small arms production and the potential markets are now closer together. Here, the Secretary-General underscored the increase in craft production outside the legal framework. Let us note also the progressive blurring of the distinction between the trade and the brokering of small arms and of the demarcation line between underdevelopment, instability, fragility, crisis and war, as well as the mixed impact of operations to collect and destroy small weapons. Evidence of this blurring is provided by the situation in various countries where such destruction is taking place.

This state of affairs is linked to the quantity of stocks now in circulation. Here, it is important to adopt effective measures to prevent illicit transfers,

particularly by strengthening control over the end use, which is often an extremely important measure and one that must become a priority for States wishing to effectively contain the proliferation of light weapons.

These observations have guided the approach of the Government of Benin, which has taken an inventory of the craft producers of weapons at the national level and maintains a rigorous oversight of their activities. Those activities are now regulated by a decree and are thus contained within the limits of what is acceptable in terms of existing international standards, at the level of the United Nations and of subregional cooperation, in particular the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Convention, the ratification procedure for which is well under way.

Benin fully concurs with the analysis of the Secretary-General regarding the need for an integrated approach in efforts to exert control over the underlying causes and especially the structural causes of conflicts and armed violence, while also dealing effectively with the factors influencing the demand for light weapons. That is the major purpose of resolution 1625 (2005) on conflict prevention, particularly in Africa, which we need to systematically implement, in conjunction with the international instruments now in force and with the actors in this area, while at the same time establishing synergies between security, development and human rights, and taking into account the problem of armed violence in strategies to combat poverty and to promote the rule of law and human security.

Considering the action of the Security Council, we need to underscore the importance of the embargoes imposed on weapons as a means for putting an end to conflicts and facilitating efforts for their ultimate settlement. We welcome the supporting measures adopted by the Security Council to prevail on States to respect and implement embargoes consistently, wherever possible. The effectiveness of such regulation will be strengthened if it includes an appraisal of the effective capacity of the neighbouring States to implement these embargoes in order to establish the required support.

Regarding the social impact of small arms, we welcome the emphasis in the report on attention to the protection of vulnerable individuals affected by armed violence. Benin has contributed through resolution 1612 (2005) in order to establish a framework for protecting children in armed conflicts. Aside from young girls and women, whose specific problems are taken into account in resolution 1325 (2000), we should also pay attention to the situation of the elderly. They suffer greatly as a result of armed conflicts. Particular attention should be paid to their needs, even if they are presumed to be covered by the efforts undertaken for the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

The international community must find ways of substantially reducing the number of arms currently in circulation in the world by increasingly sensitizing the manufacturing countries and by supporting initiatives to this end. Benin subscribes to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and to the African Declaration adopted in Nairobi on 31 October 2007 on the same subject. It is also our view that setting quantitative goals would be most useful.

The next biennial meeting of States to review the Programme of Action of the United Nations on Small Arms and Light Weapons could serve as a framework for an in-depth discussion on this issue. It should also devote particular attention to the weaknesses in the Programme of Action, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General.

Quantitative goals can be made credible by specifically identifying surplus stocks of both arms and ammunition and proceeding to destroy them. The Security Council has an important role to play here, together with the Peacebuilding Commission. The reform of the security sector in vulnerable or post-conflict States would provide an appropriate framework for a systematic international action in this area. That could considerably improve the prospects of mankind in the area of international peace and security.

The President: I now call on the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): I am indeed very pleased to see you today, Ambassador Kumalo, at the end of a productive presidency of the Security Council in this month of April.

We are also thankful to Ms. Hannelore Hoppe of the Office of Disarmament Affairs for her presentation of the Secretary-General's report.

The ready availability and the misuse of small arms and light weapons pose a great threat to the security of States. Such weapons exacerbate conflicts,

fuel international terrorism, undermine peacebuilding efforts and contribute to immense suffering. The issue of small arms and light weapons, whether in the context of disarmament, national security or public security or from a humanitarian perspective, must therefore be discussed in all relevant and appropriate forums. The solution to this problem requires the commitment of all States and the assistance of civil society, as well as the necessary inputs of international, regional and subregional entities.

The international community has been working in unison in order to establish effective mechanisms to deal with the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons. In this context, attention should continue to be devoted to the process of monitoring the implementation of the measures contained in the Programme of Action of the 2001 Conference.

Our collective experience in implementing the Programme of Action has clearly revealed some of its shortcomings. The ambitious goals of the Programme are still far from being accomplished. They continue to require reinforced commitment and political will from Governments and civil societies. That is particularly important in the light of the upcoming Biennial Meeting to consider the implementation of the Programme of Action. In this respect, we think that many areas have yet to be adequately addressed.

The current report of the Secretary-General brings to light some areas where progress, we believe, can be made. In particular, we welcome the recommendation to develop an international framework for authentication, reconciliation and standardization of end-user certificates. That would be an important step towards improving export and import controls. Enacting, enforcing and strengthening transfers controls is a shared responsibility of all States and an essential measure to prevent the diversion of small arms and light weapons to the illicit market. We firmly believe deliberations on this issue must lead to an international instrument that effectively disciplines the legal trade in conventional arms without interfering with the right of States to manufacture, import, export, transfer and retain such weapons.

The report of the Secretary-General also makes some interesting points that should be highlighted. It notes that the issue of ammunition is not adequately addressed by the Programme of Action or by the international marking and tracing instrument, but it does form a key component of the small arms issue.

We concur with the Secretary-General's assessment that the non-legally binding status of the Programme of Action may imply lower prioritization than is needed. We think that this is also the case with the marking and tracing instrument.

On the issue of the destruction of surplus ammunition and stockpile management, Brazil is aware of the security and safety problems that may arise from inadequate procedures, especially in post-conflict situations. However, the determination of what constitutes surplus quantities is the purview of the competent national authorities, subject to the respective national constitutional and legal systems, as provided for in the Programme of Action.

There is a growing awareness in Brazil regarding the importance of controlling firearms in all aspects, given the impact on public security. In 2004, in collaboration with State governments and organized civil society, the Federal Government launched a major nationwide disarmament campaign aimed at promoting a culture of peace, raising public awareness on the dangers inherent in the possession of weapons and stimulating their voluntary disposal.

Between July 2004 and October 2005, 464,000 guns were collected by the campaign, which has also been considered instrumental in reducing killings. Before the campaign, homicide rates were constantly increasing in Brazil. This trend was reversed in 2004, with a reduction of 12 per cent in that ominous rate from 2003 to 2006. In view of this positive result, the Brazilian Government has recently relaunched the campaign.

At the subregional and regional levels, there have also been important developments. Along with the reinforcement of internal legislative measures, Brazil is progressively strengthening cooperation with its MERCOSUR partners to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

The implementation and further development of the Programme of Action will enhance the importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing global challenges in this field through globally coordinated responses. Despite national efforts, there are still loopholes that allow the diversion of small arms and light weapons to the illegal market. We think much

more remains to be done. For that reason Brazil will continue to work with determination towards achieving the goal of eliminating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. We also thank Ms. Hoppe for her briefing on the report of the Secretary-General.

This debate — which is not the first to be held by Security Council on this topic — is of particular importance in light of the upcoming Third Biennial Meeting of States on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. While the origin and nature of the Programme of Action were an initiative of the General Assembly, we see the participation of the Security Council with a view to its success as necessary, given its function as the body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Since 1999, the Council has spoken out on the impact of this phenomenon and the intensity and duration of armed conflicts, and how they undermine peace agreements, generate complications for peacebuilding efforts and increase the vulnerability of civilians. More recently it has spoken out on the humanitarian consequences and their social and economic implications.

In connection to the Recommendation 1 in the report of the Secretary-General, the commitment of Guatemala is shown through its participation in the Central American small arms control programme, which has a regional scope. One of the axes of its work is the exchange of information for control and tracing. This programme has facilitated the exchange of information and cooperation among the member States of the Central American Integration System and has also helped in prevention, combating and eradicating the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons at the borders.

We are concerned that the nature and ambition of the adopted international instrument on marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons do not correspond to the needs to the countries most affected. We hope to be able to meet that goal later. We feel that we should seek better results in other comprehensive provisions of the Programme of Action that still need to be addressed.

The proposal to create baseline inventories with a view to having quantitative indicators for small arms in order to establish measurable goals is timely.

We welcome the reference in the report of the Secretary-General to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development. In April 2007, Guatemala hosted the meeting of Latin American and Caribbean countries to develop a strategy for the implementation of the plan of action, which responds to the mandates of the Geneva Declaration. That meeting was a political effort to place on the development agenda of countries the need for a comprehensive approach to the general problem generated by the proliferation and misuse of small arms.

Annexed to that Declaration was the adopted Declaration of Guatemala on Armed Violence and Development, which would serve as a base for national and regional work to reduce armed violence from a development perspective. Guatemala agreed to be the first pilot country, and the preparatory work is already being done to initiate implementation of the Geneva Declaration on the ground.

The spirit of Recommendation 4 covers one of the main areas of competence of the Security Council in this regard. Accordingly, we believe that a comprehensive approach will require not only decisive and timely imposition of arms embargoes by the Council, but also their strict monitoring. We appreciate the efforts of the sanctions committees and their monitoring machinery to supervise compliance with the measures against the illicit trade in small arms. We are sure that their future work will be strengthened through the inclusion by Member States in their national legislation of measures to prevent violations of the embargoes imposed by the Security Council.

Furthermore, as indicated by the Secretary-General in recommendations 6, 7 and 9, it is important that the Council be able to include elements related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, including the destruction of surplus stockpiles. It is encouraging to see that this has already been put into practice, and we welcome the fact that the Council has noted the importance of applying broad international and regional criteria incorporating the social and economic aspects of DDR, including the special needs of women and child soldiers.

At the national level, Guatemala has made a great effort in the implementation of the Programme of Action. In 2004, the National Commission for the Eradication of Illegal Firearms was established with the mandate to formulate, coordinate and implement a national disarmament programme within our State civil security policy. At the subregional and regional levels important progress has also been made. Guatemala was the venue for the preparatory meeting of Latin American and Caribbean countries to review progress on the Programme of Action. The Antigua Guatemala Declaration was adopted at that meeting. It reflected the views of countries to make progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action and to meaningfully address some topics that are not dealt with adequately by the Programme of Action. Unfortunately, the expectations of our Declaration far surpassed the outcome of the 2006 review conference.

The Antigua Guatemala Declaration states that arms and ammunition transfers through illicit brokers pose one of the greatest risks for the diversion of small arms and light weapons to the illicit market, including to non-State actors. Guatemala therefore proposes the adoption of a legally binding instrument on the conventional arms trade. We welcome the establishment and work of the Group of Governmental Experts addressing this issue.

Finally, my delegation believes that the efforts of the international community to address the problem of small arms, as well as the momentum that has been generated in the General Assembly, will be well strengthened through this type of debate. We believe that this will mean additional political thrust for the implementation of the 2001 Programme of Action and will ensure that the United Nations will continue to play a key role in combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.